

## Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 ATHENS 5254

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SOPN  
SUBJECT: COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR KUBISCH

1. BELOW IS THE TEXT OF A JUNE 6 COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY  
AMBASSADOR KUBISCH AT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHHOLS HIGH SCHOOL,  
ATHENS, GREECE:

2. BEGIN TEXT:

CHOICES

GRADUATING SENIORS, PARENTS, DR HAAS, PRINCIPAL AMMERMAN, IT IS  
AN HONOR -- AND A CHALLENGE -- TO BE WITH YOU TODAY.  
COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS ARE USUALLY EXPECTED TO OFFER DISTILLED WISDOM.  
WE ARE SUPPOSED TO IMPART THAT ONE MORSEL OF WISDOM WHICH IF  
RIGOROUSLY APPLIED WILL INEVITABLY LEAD THE GRADUATES TO A LIFE OF  
HARMONY, SATISFACTION, AND FULFILLMENT. FEW SPEAKERS -- IF ANY --  
SUCCEED.  
AS I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT TO SAY TODAY MY MIND KEPT RETURNING TO  
THE STORY OF THE YOUNG MAN WHO COMPLETED AN ARDUOUS PILGRIMAGE,  
BESET BY DANGERS, TO A DISTANT LAND IN ORDER TO ASK AN EXTREMELY  
OLD, EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL MAN WHAT WAS THE KEY TO SUCCESS.  
THE OLD MAN TOLD HIM, "TO SUCCEED YOU MUST MAKE THE RIGHT  
DECISIONS."  
"HOW DO I LEARN TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS?" THE YOUNG MAN

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ASKED.  
"THROUGH EXPERIENCE" HE WAS TOLD.  
"ONE FINAL QUESTION, "ASKED THE YOUNG MAN, "HOW DO I GAIN  
EXPERIENCE?"  
THE OLD MAN HESITATED A MOMENT, THEN REPLIED, "BY MAKING THE  
WRONG DECISIONS."  
FOR YOU GRADUATING SENIORS, THERE IS A MESSAGE IN THAT STORY.

IT IS THAT ULTIMATELY YOUR LIFE WILL BE WRITTEN IN CHOICES, YOUR CHOICES.

THUS I DECIDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT CHOICE. CHOICE BY INDIVIDUALS AND CHOICE BY NATIONS.

INDIVIDUALS AND NATIONS SHARE THIS ABOUT CHOICE:

-- FOR NO ONE ARE ALL CHOICES OPEN

-- FOR EVERYONE THERE IS ALWAYS A MARGIN OF CHOICE

-- FOR NO ONE CAN CHOICE BE AVOIDED

-- FOR EVERYONE THE MOST DIFFICULT CHOICES ARE NOT THOSE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. THE MOST DIFFICULT CHOICES ARE THOSE BETWEEN COMPETING GOODS - AND COMPETING EVILS.

AND IF INDIVIDUALS WRITE THEIR LIVES IN THEIR CHOICES, NATIONS ETCH THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY BY THE QUALITY OF THEIR DECISIONS.

AS INDIVIDUALS YOU ARE PROBABLY CONFRONTING FOR THE FIRST TIME HOW DIFFICULT AND HOW NECESSARY IT IS TO MAKE CHOICES. IN THIS YOU ARE NOT TERRIBLY DIFFERENT FROM THE SENIORS OF MY GENERATION -- DESPITE THE YEARS AND MILES THAT SEPARATE ATHENS 1977 FROM HANNIBAL, MISSOURI BACK IN 1938 -- MY HOME TOWN AND HIGH SCHOOL THEN -- WHICH REMAINED MUCH AS MARK TWAIN HAD DESCRIBED IT.

WE, LIKE YOU, WERE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WE WERE GOING TO DO WITH OUR LIVES.

WE, LIKE YOU, AGONIZED ABOUT WHERE AND WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH OUR STUDIES.

WE, LIKE YOU, WONDERED WHETHER WE HAD THE STUFF IN OURSELVES TO "SUCCEED".

AND, LIKE YOUR PARENTS, OUR PARENTS SUFFERED WITH US. AND FACED WITH US THE KNOWLEDGE THAT A POINT OF SEPARATION WAS INEVITABLY COMING TOWARDS US.

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AS A FATHER WHO HAS SENT HIS FOUR CHILDREN OFF TO SCHOOL, LET ME TELL YOU THAT THE PARENTS' FEARS OF LOSS ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED. WHAT MATTERS FINALLY ARE NOT THE MILES THAT SEPARATE YOU, BUT HOW CLOSE YOU HAVE BEEN AND WANT TO REMAIN.

AND LOOKING BACK ON MY EXPERIENCE IN 1938, WHAT LOOKED TO US THEN LIKE FINAL CHOICES TURNED OUT LATER TO BE CONSIDERABLY LESS.

I MYSELF COULDN'T DECIDE WHETHER TO PURSUE A CAREER AS A CHEMICAL ENGINEER OR A LAWYER. AND HERE I AM AMBASSADOR TO GREECE. I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT DIPLOMATIC SERVICE UNTIL AFTER I WAS OUT OF COLLEGE.

SO, IF I MAY OFFER A BIT OF PERSONAL ADVICE, WAIT A BIT -- IF YOU CAN -- BEFORE EXERCISING YOUR FINAL CAREER CHOICES. IT WAS ALL GAIN FOR ME AND NO LOSS AT ALL TO DELAY CHOOSING MY OWN PRINCIPAL CAREER. I WAS NOT THE SAME PERSON AT 24 THAT I WAS AT 18.

IN ANY CASE, AS A RESULT OF YOUR LIFE IN GREECE -- AND YOUR EDUCATION AT THIS FINE SCHOOL - YOU HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY WELL PREPARED TO MAKE SOME OF YOUR OWN CHOICES.

-- GREECE HAS GIVEN YOU A SENSE OF HISTORY. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE

TO SPEND ANY TIME IN THIS NATION WITHOUT FEELING THAT WE ALL HAVE  
A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP NURTURE AND EXPAND ITS PRICELESS  
HERITAGE.

-- GREECE HAS ALSO GIVEN YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE IN TWO  
CULTURES. YOU HAVE GAINED AN ENRICHED PERSPECTIVE ON BOTH. MOST  
PEOPLE LEARN ONLY TO VALUE WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT, AND WITH THAT  
CAN COME THE PUNISHMENTS OF PREJUDICE AND INTOLERANCE. YOU HAVE  
LEARNED TO VALUE DIVERSITY, AND WITH THAT COMES THE GIFTS OF  
UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION.

THUS, GREECE HAS GIVEN YOU A SPECIAL ENDOWMENT; AND ALL OF US  
WHO HAVE LIVED IN THIS LAND OWE A GREAT DEBT TO GREECE AND THE  
GREEK PEOPLE.

LET ME SPEAK ALSO ABOUT THE CHOICES OF NATIONS AND THOSE OF THE  
NATION I KNOW BEST, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

LIKE THE INDIVIDUAL, A NATION MUST MAKE CHOICES. BUT NATIONS  
FACE SPECIAL PROBLEMS AS THEY MAKE DECISIONS:

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-- THE INDIVIDUAL FREQUENTLY CAN, INDEED SOMETIMES SHOULD, DELAY  
DECISIONS. A NATION CAN SELDOM DELAY CHOICE. TO DELAY IS TO BECOME  
THE PRISONER OF EVENTS.

-- INDIVIDUALS CAN QUICKLY, AT LITTLE COST, CHANGE THEIR MINDS.  
NATIONS, ESPECIALLY DEMOCRACIES, SELDOM CAN -- AT LEAST NOT WITHOUT  
ENORMOUS DIFFICULTY AND GREAT COST TO THEMSELVES AND OTHERS.

-- INDIVIDUALS CAN MAKE MISTAKES, AND WALK AWAY FROM THEM,  
CHALKING UP ANOTHER MARK TO EXPERIENCE. NATIONS CANNOT WALK AWAY  
FROM THEIR MISTAKES.

AT NO TIME IN MAN'S HISTORY HAVE THE CHOICES OF NATIONS BEEN  
MORE CRITICAL.

MANKIND'S TECHNICAL GENIUS HAS TRULY OPENED UP THE PROSPECT  
OF A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE, STABILITY, AND COOPERATION. BUT THE  
SAME TECHNICAL GENIUS HAS PRODUCED FEARS THAT COMPLETE WITH OUR  
HOPES.

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-- WE CAN MAKE NUCLEAR ENERGY OUR OBEDIENT SERVANT OR BECOME ITS HAPLESS VICTIM.

-- WE CAN BRING A BETTER LIFE TO ALL BY BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE FEW WHO HAVE MUCH AND THE MANY WHO HAVE LITTLE, OR WE CAN FALL INTO THE HATREDS AND VIOLENCE SUCH DIFFERENCES GENERATE;

-- WE CAN CONSERVE AND REPAIR OUR ENVIRONMENT OR DESTROY IT WITH POISON AND POLLUTION;

-- WE CAN PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS OR SEE THEM CRUELLY DISREGARDED.

NO SINGLE NATION CAN THROUGH ITS OWN EFFORTS ACHIEVE WHAT IS PROMISED -- NOR WARD OFF WHAT IS FEARED.

WHAT IS REQUIRED -- OVER THE COURSE OF MANY YEARS -- IS AN UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. COOPERATION TO FORM A COMMON VISION OF THE FUTURE. AND COOPERATION TO MAKE THAT VISION A REALITY.

WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE IN REACHING ACROSS CULTURES, I EXPECT -- AND HOPE -- THAT MANY OF YOU WILL CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING BOTH THE SHARED VISION AND THE COMMON EFFORT THAT IS REQUIRED.

I KNOW THIS:

THE UNITED STATES IS DETERMINED TO CONTRIBUTE IN A MAJOR WAY TO BUILDING A COOPERATIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND STABLE WORLD. FOR YEARS NO ONE DOUBTED OUR LEADERSHIP IN TECHNOLOGY, IN INDUSTRY, IN AGRICULTURE, IN MILITARY STRENGTH, AND ABOVE ALL IN INNOVATIVE IDEAS. BUT DURING A DARK DECADE WE WOUNDED OURSELVES AND IN SO DOING LOST SOME OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN OURSELVES. TODAY  
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WE HAVE RECOVERED THAT CONFIDENCE.

WE HAVE RENEWED OUR FAITH IN OUR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND IN OUR PURPOSES. WE KNOW THAT OUR VALUES AT HOME MUST BE FAITHFULLY TRANSCRIBED IN AMERICA'S ACTIONS ABROAD IF OUR OWN LIBERTY AND PROGRESS ARE TO BE ASSURED.

PRESIDENT CARTER HAS RECENTLY OUTLINED THE MAIN PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL GUIDE THE UNITED STATES:

-- AMERICA'S POLICY WILL REFLECT OUR COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS;

-- AMERICA'S POLICY WILL BE BASED ON CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE DEMOCRACIES OF THE WORLD WITH WHOM WE SHARE VALUES AND HOPES;

-- AMERICA'S POLICY WILL SEEK THROUGH A MIXTURE OF STRENGTH AND RECIPROCAL ACCOMMODATION TO REACH ACROSS IDEOLOGICAL DIVISIONS AND REDUCE THE RISK OF WAR;

-- AMERICA'S POLICY WILL BE TO WORK WITH THE DEVELOPING NATIONS AS THE WORLD SEEKS TO NARROW THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ITS RICH AND ITS POOR;  
-- AMERICA'S POLICY WILL BE TO ENCOURAGE ALL NATIONS TO WORK TOGETHER TO OVERCOME THE THREATS OF NUCLEAR WAR, ARMS RACES, RACIAL HATRED, POLLUTION, HUNGER, AND DISEASE.  
A FULL AGENDA. AND ONE WHICH RECOGNIZES NOT ONLY THE UNITED STATES POWER BUT ALSO THE LIMITS ON THAT POWER. AN AGENDA WHICH SEEKS TO EVOKE CREATIVE AND COMMON RESPONSES BECAUSE IT KNOWS THAT IT CANNOT UNILATERALLY IMPOSE SOLUTIONS. AND AN AGENDA THAT IN APPLICATION WILL FORCE CHOICES AND DECISIONS OF THE MOST DIFFICULT SORT.

BUT IT IS AN AGENDA THAT IS BEING APPLIED. LET ME SUMMARIZE ITS APPLICATION TO GREECE:  
FIRST, THE UNITED STATES WILL SUPPORT GREEK DEMOCRACY. THE GREEK PEOPLE BROUGHT ABOUT THE MIRACULOUS, NON-VIOLENT RETURN OF DEMOCRACY TO GREECE. IT IS THEIR OWN FUTURE CHOICES THAT WILL SHARE THE SUCCESS OF THEIR DEMOCRACY MUST REST. HOWEVER, THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT BY ANYONE IN THIS COUNTRY OR ELSEWHERE THAT THE UNITED STATES FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT ITS INTERESTS AND VALUES ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THE SUCCESS OF GREEK DEMOCRACY -- AND WILL ACT  
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ACCORDINGLY.  
SECOND, THE UNITED STATES KNOWS THAT ITS VALUES AND ITS INTERESTS IN THE AREA CAN ONLY BE SERVED BY JUST AND LASTING SETTLEMENT OF THE CYPRUS ISSUE AND THE PROBLEMS IN THE AEGEAN WHICH DIVIDE GREECE AND TURKEY. WE CAN MEASURE THE DAMAGE OF WHAT HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE. WE KNOW THE COSTS IN HUMAN TRAGEDY. WE ALSO KNOW THE RISKS INVOLVED IN FAILING TO FIND SOLUTIONS. NO ONE SHOULD DOUBT OUR ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO PLAY OUR PROPER ROLE IN HELPING TO FIND THESE SOLUTIONS.  
THIRD, THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN ITS TRADITIONAL TIES WITH GREECE. GREECE AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE SHARED GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS TOTETHER, INCLUDING THE CLOSEST COOPERATION IN LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN GREECE AND IN MAINTAINING OVERALL SECURITY IN THE AREA. NEARLY THREE MILLION AMERICANS TRACE THEIR ORIGINS TO GREECE. WE RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THAT EVEN THE CLOSEST MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY CAN SOMETIMES HAVE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW AND, AT TIMES, STRESS DIFFERING CONCERNS; BUT WE APPROACH ALL ISSUES WITH GREECE IN A SPIRIT OF TOTAL GOOD-WILL AND CONSTRUCTIVE COOPERATION ROTTED IN LARGER, MUTUAL HOPES AND OVERALL COMMON PURPOSES.  
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JUNE 6 HAS A VERY SPECIAL MEANING TO AMERICANS AND EUROPEANS OF MY GENERATION. THIRTY-THREE YEARS AGO TODAY THE ALLIES DISEMBARKED AT NORMANDY, THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE WAR IN EUROPE. DURING THAT WAR WESTERN CIVILIZATION DESCENDED INTO THE DEPTHS OF A BARBARISM FROM WHICH IT VERY NEARLY DID NOT RECOVER. MY GENERATION FOUGHT THAT WAR. THROUGH SOME AGONIZING AND DIFFICULT CHOICES WE ALSO HELPED TO REKINDLE AND NURTURE THE FLAME OF HUMANISM AND FREEDOM, THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR CIVILIZATION. I BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL HAVE GAINED FROM GREECE A DEEPER COMMITMENT TO THESE IDEALS THAN MANY OF YOUR CONTEMPORARIES. I HOPE THAT IN YOUR CHOICES -- AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS CITIZENS -- SUCH VALUES WILL ALWAYS SERVE AS GUIDING BEACONS. IT WILL BE YOUR CHOICE THAT DETERMINES WHETHER THE VALUES YOU CHERISH PREVAIL IN THE WORLD YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER. FOR IT IS A NEW WORLD -- AND YOU SHOULD NOT FEAR IT. IT IS A NEW WORLD - AND YOU CAN HELP TO SHARE IT. IN GRADUATING TODAY YOU ARE ALSO ACQUIRING ADDITIONAL FREEDOM TO MAKE YOUR CHOICES. BUT DO NOT MISTAKE SUCH FREEDOM FOR A LICENSE TO DO WHATEVER YOU MAY FANCY AT THE MOMENT. SUCH A MISCONSTRUCTION, LIKE CONFUSING MERE PLEASURE WITH TRUE HAPPINESS, IS A SURE PATH TO EVENTUAL DISAPPOINTMENT. YOUR NEWFOUND FREEDOM IMPOSES UPON YOU NEW RESPONSIBILITY: TO MAKE YOUR CHOICES CAREFULLY, THOUGHTFULLY, RESPONSIBLY. FOR, IN THE END, IT WILL BE YOUR CHOICES THAT WILL DETERMINE WHETHER YOU FIND A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT. I AM SURE YOU WOULDN'T WANT IT ANY OTHER WAY.

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I ALSO KNOW THAT ALL OF US HERE WISH YOU EVERY SUCCESS.  
THANK YOU. END TEXT.  
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